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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 000308

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BH](#) [KV](#) [UN](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: MFA'S SPECIAL REP ON BIH, KOSOVO, EULEX

Classified By: Acting DCM Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request, see paragraph 7.

Summary

[1](#)2. (C) The MFA Special Representative Botsan-Kharchenko told us February 5 that Russia would be satisfied with a technocratic replacement to Office of High Representative (OHR) Lacjak to oversee what it expects will be the quick closure of the OHR office. Botsan-Kharchenko recognized Russia was unlikely to win European support in the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) for closure of the OHR in March, but warned against introducing constitutional changes as new conditionality and downplayed concerns over RS PM Dodik. Botsan-Kharchenko sought U.S. views on a replacement of the PIC, following closure of the OHR. On Serbia, Botsan-Kharchenko complained about the lack of dialogue between Belgrade and the UN. Despite the hardships of the gas crisis, Russia does not see any negative consequences in relations with the RS or Serbia. End summary.

Replacing the BiH High Representative

[1](#)3. (C) In a February 5 meeting, Russian MFA Special Representative for the Balkans Aleksandr Botsan-Kharchenko told us that he expected the EU to provide the name of their consensus candidate to replace outgoing High Representative Lajcak the following week (February 9-13). He shared the GoR's assessment that the candidate "will not have political weight" and said that it was "enough to appoint a technical person" in order to see OHR through to closure and transition to a reduced EU Special Representative. He underscored that the GoR wanted the agreement of both the PIC and the UNSC on the candidate for High Representative, and noted that it was also important to get the agreement of the Bosnian parties. He said that the "reshuffle" at the top of OHR should not be used to delay its closure, while we countered that this situation should not lead to a watering down of conditions or a hasty move to shutter OHR.

[1](#)4. (C) Botsan-Kharchenko agreed with us that the approval process for the EU's proposed candidate needed to move quickly, and he outlined two alternative processes to move forward. Based on his recent discussions with the Germans, he said that the EU might coordinate a conference call of PIC members or a sub-set of PIC members to seek endorsement of the EU's candidate. As an alternative, he understood that the EU might seek a meeting of PIC ambassadors with EU SyG/HR Solana. He noted, however, that whichever alternative was chosen, the GoR would seek a visit by the candidate to Russia before making its final decision.

5-plus-2 Conditions and Closure

[1](#)5. (C) While Botsan-Kharchenko argued that a breakthrough at the Prud trio meeting in Mostar February 23 could justify a

decision to close OHR at the March PIC meeting, he conceded that this would be too fast for the EU. A Prud breakthrough "would build on" the agreements made on Brcko and state property made at the January 26 Prud meeting in Banja Luka. Saying that it was likely that the Bosnian leaders could come to agreement on five-plus-two conditions, Botsan-Kharchenko opposed making the constitution a part of the conditions, "otherwise Bosnia will not achieve it".

¶6. (C) He dismissed our concerns regarding RS PM Dodik's efforts to undermine the Federation, saying that the GoR was aware of Dodik's statements after Kosovo's independence, but that Dodik and the RS were "now fully in-line." In defending Dodik, he said that many of Dodik's efforts were not to undermine state institutions but "to maintain the competencies of the Serb entity" for a future state.

Replacement for PIC

¶7. (C) Botsan-Kharchenko sought U.S. opinion on a replacement for the PIC after the closure of OHR. He said that Russia would like to replace the body, but that such a replacement must have "a voice and influence." Clearly reflecting unease over ceding all Russian influence to the EU, Botsan-Kharchenko requested U.S. opinions or proposals on what, if anything, should replace the PIC as a forum for U.S. and Russian views. He said that he was open to discuss our ideas. (Note: Post requests guidance in response to the Special Representative's request. End note.)

Serbia-Kosovo

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¶8. (C) The Special Representative said that Russia remained concerned that there were no discussions between the UN and Serbia after agreement on the six-points. He stressed that dialogue between the two was necessary because Belgrade would not engage directly with EULEX, as it is a part of the Ahtisaari process. Botsan-Kharchenko assessed that Serbian President Tadic had a balanced position that did not unduly encourage Kosovar Serbs; nevertheless, Tadic had to operate within Serbian domestic political constraints and engagement with the Ahtisaari-organ EULEX was not politically possible.

Russia-Serbia

¶9. (C) Following the gas crisis, Botsan-Kharchenko said that the situation had not undermined Russia's relations with Serbia or with the Republic of Srbska. "We are happy," he said, "Tadic is developing relations with the EU and Russia in parallel, as he promised he would." Russia is expecting the visit of Serbian Foreign Minister Jeremic and representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church February 20 for meetings with FM Lavrov and newly enthroned Russian Patriarch Kirill.
BEYRLE